**National Nursing Home Week Is Just Around the Corner!**

National Nursing Home Week 2016 (May 8-14) will be here before we know it. Is your center planning something special? The theme for 2016, *It’s a Small World with a Big Heart*, pays homage to the fact that each skilled nursing care center is a small, vibrant world. They are sharing, welcoming communities that encourage everyone to interact with the wonderful people who populate them. Each year during NNHW, care centers nationwide take pride in publicly honoring the indomitable spirit of residents and recognizing staff who face each day with a sense of purpose and compassion. This year’s theme also tips its hat toward community fair culture, so prepare to have a week filled with fun!

IHCA would love to see how you celebrate. If you have any photos you would like to share, please send them (along with a signed release form for each resident captured in a photo) to Ashley Caldwell…you may see some familiar faces in an IHCA publication down the road!

Specialty products are still available for purchase with this year’s theme/logo. To purchase NNHW specialty products including posters, balloons, t-shirts, buttons, and more, shop online or call 800-321-0343.

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**Hearing Aid Use Associated with Improved Cognitive Function**

According to a recent study by researchers at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD, hearing aids may lessen the forgetfulness and confusion tied to hearing loss. What sets this study apart is the fact that it looks at whether or not wearing hearing aids will lessen the risk of future cognitive problems in individuals with moderate to severe hearing loss. To date, few studies have even touched on that question. Previous studies have noted a link to an increased risk between hearing loss and cognitive problems, but the underlying cause remains unknown. Researchers surmise that the two conditions may be linked through inflammation, social isolation or a number of other conditions.

“This study is important because it focuses on a risk factor that is amenable to intervention in later life and could potentially postpone cognitive decline,” said Jennifer Deal, the study’s lead author.

Researchers used data from a past study to see if wearing hearing aids provided individuals with any protection against future problems. The study included more than 250 participants from Maryland, with an average age of 77 years, most of which suffered from hearing loss. They were tested on memory, learning, language and processing speed/attention a number of times between 1990 and 1998. They were then given an intensive cognitive test in 2013.
The results showed an overall decline for participants with moderate to severe hearing loss over the 20+ year period, with participants who reported not wearing a hearing aid experiencing the largest decline. Those who reported wearing hearing aids showed only slightly worse test scores than those with normal hearing.

Wearing hearing aids may not directly protect against cognitive decline, cautioned Deal, but it does speak to the importance of treating hearing loss. Communication training or other audiologic rehabilitation could also provide critical assistance for an improved quality of life, said Dr. Alice Holmes (not involved directly with the study).

“I think treating the hearing loss can really improve someone’s overall quality of life and not only does it improve that quality of life but also others’ around him,” Holmes told Reuters Health.

For more information, click here to read the full article in the Annals of Long-Term Care.

**B Cells Create ‘Bone Chewers’ in Individuals with Rheumatoid Arthritis**

Researchers have discovered a new mechanism of bone erosion for rheumatoid arthritis—and a possible biomarker of the condition. This is the first time a group has been able to demonstrate that immune cells (called B cells) contribute directly to the breakdown of bone that occurs in RA by producing a molecule called RANKL.

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) affects approximately 1.5 million adults in the U.S., according to the CDC. RA sufferers’ immune systems attack their own joint tissue, which causes painful stiffness and swelling of the joints. It can also cause erosion of the bones in the joints, which can cause permanent damaging, and can even often leave patients unable to perform everyday tasks, such as dressing themselves or tying their shoes.

The author of the study, Jennifer Anolik, is a professor of medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center. She found that B cells extracted from the blood of RA patients produced more RANKL, leading to the production of more bone-chewing cells (called osteoclasts) than those taken from the blood of healthy volunteers. These results were even more obvious when looking at B cells taken from the joint fluid and tissue of individuals with RA, a fact that has added a great deal of weight to this particular study. Many studies only look at blood samples due to it being much easier to collect than tissue; however, thanks to a collaboration between rheumatologists and orthopedic surgeons at the Center for Musculoskeletal Research, Anolik and her team were able to study the joint tissues collected during RA patient surgeries.

“The novel finding is that B cells contribute to bone erosion in RA by producing RANKL,” says Anolik. “The other striking thing is that RA patient B cells produce more RANKL—especially in the joint itself.”

It has been thought that because B cells are essential for the immune system to attack joint tissue in RA patients, therapies that target B cells should be able to help. However, nearly half of the patients that receive these therapies do not get better. Anolik and her team believe that the reason for this is that all B cells are not doing exactly the same thing in RA. According to the research, B cells from RA patient joint cells spontaneously produce RANKL, while B cells from the blood require inflammatory factors to do so, meaning that there are different populations of B cells within the patient.

“We know that there are good B cells and you don’t want to eliminate those,” stated Nida Meednu, research assistant. “But, there are some B cells that are more pathogenic. So, you might want to target subsets of B cells, not all of them at once.”

Anolik and Meednu believe that RANKL could be used as a marker to decide which patients are most likely to have progressive joint damage and which drugs are most likely to help.

For further details, click here to read the full article from Futurity.

**Video Chat May Reduce Agitation in Individuals with Dementia**

Non-drug interventions to assist with behaviors in individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and/or dementia is always a hot topic in long term care. As providers, making sure that resident needs are met is paramount. Unfortunately, residents with dementia may not be able to express those needs and it can lead to depression, agitation and other behaviors.
"In nursing homes people are often isolated. They might have people around them but nothing much is happening that involves them and that addresses their personal needs and interests and background and skills," said Dr. Daniel O'Connor, an expert in elderly psychiatry.

Contact with family and friends, the people who know the residents best, can be limited due to distance and busy schedules, noted O’Conner. Phone calls or recorded messages may help on a short-term basis, but often fails to offer enough sensory stimulation to truly make an impact, particularly as the dementia progresses and the individuals become less able to focus and to recognize faces, let along voices on the phone or a recording.

In order to determine if contact with loved ones would be more effective if dementia sufferers could see them as well as speak to them, Dr. O’Conner performed a 12-month study in five nursing homes in Melbourne, Australia. For the study he compared the impact of repeated 20-minute Skype video chats with standard audio-only phone calls.

Results of this randomized study did show less agitation in residents during the Skype chats. However, Dr. O’Conner points out that more research is required. "It certainly looked promising," he explained. "Our findings suggest, but do not prove, that visual and auditory sensory inputs capture attention and reduce agitated behaviours more effectively than auditory inputs alone."

Using video chats to help calm agitated residents requires a lot of factors to fall into place simultaneously, such as having the technology, the internet connection and staff or volunteers to assist residents during the calls, but it may be worth the effort in the long run.

**Certain Over-the-Counter Meds May Cause Older Brains to Shrink**

A new study recently revealed that a certain class of drugs commonly found in over-the-counter medications like nighttime cold medicines has been linked to cognitive impairment. Though previous research found a link between this type of medication (known as anticholinergic drugs) and cognitive impairment and increased risk of dementia, this new study is believed to be the first to focus on the potential underlying biology of those clinical links.

Anticholinergic drugs block acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter. They are sold over the counter and by prescription as sleep aids, as well as in medications for many chronic diseases, including but not limited to hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Experts have linked anticholinergic drugs to cognitive problems among the elderly for at least 10 years.

The study included more than 450 participants, 60 of whom were taking at least one medication with medium or high anticholinergic activity. Researchers used brain imaging techniques to measure brain metabolism and atrophy, as well as traditional cognitive functioning and memory tests. Researchers assessed the results from the participants’ tests, as well as PET scans and MRIs in order to gauge possible physical and physiological changes. Study results showed lower metabolism and reduced brain sizes among participants taking drugs known to have an anticholinergic effect. Patients taking anticholinergic drugs performed worse than older adults not taking the drugs on cognitive and short-term memory tests.

“These findings provide us with a much better understanding of how this class of drugs may act upon the brain in ways that might raise the risk of cognitive impairment and dementia,” said Shannon Risacher, assistant professor of radiology and imaging sciences at Indiana University. “Given all the research evidence, physicians might want to consider alternatives to anticholinergic medications if available when working with their older patients.”

For more information, please check out the full article from Futurity.

**May 2016 Observances**

**May 6-12 is National Nurses Week:** Nurses play a huge role in our long term care centers every day. Take the opportunity during Nurses Week to show your nursing staff how much their dedication and hard work means to you, your staff and your residents! Click here for more information.

**May 8-14 is National Nursing Home Week:** Every year during NNHW long term care centers across the country take time out to celebrate the quality care being given to residents each day. Each center is its own little world, full of outstanding staff and amazing residents and NNHW is an excellent opportunity to honor those individuals that make these centers a home. Visit AHCA’s NNHW web page for more information.
May 8-14 is National Women’s Health Week: Organized by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office on Women’s Health, National Women’s Health Week was brought about in an effort to raise awareness about women’s health and the steps that women can take to improve it. Click here for more.

AHCA/NCAL Information

Provider Magazine to Host Twitter Chat

On May 10, Provider Magazine will host the next Twitter chat on Elder Care and Women at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time (noon Central Time). During this hour they will discuss the importance of female caregivers both in the informal and the professional roles. You will hear from experts who talk about innovative ways to provide care for the working women who are also the family caregivers. There will also be discussion on the way the U.S. is managing aging and elder care services and how we compare to others.

There is also the important role that employers play with regard to time off, educational programs and non-financial support that is needed. This is sure to be an informative discussion with a guest panel of experts to guide us. They will also have nursing staff and providers join the conversation with the expertise from the National Association of Health Care Assistants (NAHCA) and The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society. Click here for more information.

Registration is Now Open for the 67th Annual AHCA/NCAL Convention & Expo

Great entertainment, friendly people and unforgettable experiences—all of this describes Nashville, Tennessee, known as Music City USA. It also describes the AHCA/NCAL 67th Annual Convention & Expo, to be held in Nashville, October 16-19. This is the gathering place for long term and post-acute care professionals, where leaders in the field gather to share ideas, learn about new techniques and services, network, and have fun. Educational sessions are designed to help you provide for your residents in the most efficient and effective way; keynote talks will inspire you; visits to the Expo Hall will expose you to the very latest in products and services for your business; and networking events will help you make new friends. Make your plans now to attend - we'll give you lots to sing about! Click here for more information! See below for a new scholarship opportunity offered by IHCA to help pay to attend the AHCA/NCAL convention.

AHCA is Looking for Members Interested in Running for the AHCA Board of Governors

The 2016-2017 election cycle has officially opened for AHCA members in good standing interested in running for the AHCA Board of Governors. The AHCA elections are for three officer positions (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer), one Not-for-Profit Representative, one Multifacility Representative and three At-large Representatives. AHCA members interested in running for an AHCA Board position may obtain the necessary candidacy materials online. Applicants must complete and electronically submit (via email to Christy Sharp) the AHCA candidacy materials by close of business on June 6, 2016.

The AHCA elections will take place during the second Council of States meeting at the AHCA/NCAL 67th Annual Convention & Expo, October 16 - 19 in Nashville, TN. Once the application phase has ended, the AHCA/NCAL Credentialing Committee will hold an in-person meeting to conduct a certification process for each candidate. Once certification occurs, AHCA will announce the slate of candidates to the membership. If you have further questions, contact Christy Sharp.

AHCA Award Nominations

The 2016 AHCA/NCAL Awards Program is now open. To submit a nomination for one of the AHCA awards listed below, please click here. Once there, you may access the individual nomination forms that must be submitted in order for your nomination to be accepted. Mailed hard copy and fax nominations will not be accepted. Nominations are due May 23, 2016.

NCAL Award Nominations

Click here to submit an application for NCAL’s 2016 awards program for an outstanding assisted living nurse or administrator. Perhaps your community created the best National Assisted Living Week® programming based on Nourishing Life: Mind Body Spirit theme last year…then give the awards program a try. Or maybe there is an unlicensed caregiver or someone in the dietary, housekeeping, or maintenance departments that goes above and beyond the call of duty? If you answered yes, then check out NCAL’s 2016 Awards Program.
National Assisted Living Week 2016

NCAL recently announced the 2016 theme for National Assisted Living Week® - *Keep Connected*. The annual, national observance provides a unique opportunity for residents, their loved ones, staff, volunteers and surrounding communities to celebrate the individuals served in assisted living and learn more about this sector of the long term care profession.

Established by NCAL in 1995, NALW will be held September 11-17, 2016. Assisted living communities across the country are encouraged to use the theme and logo as inspiration for celebrations leading up to and during the week.

The "Keep Connected" logo may be downloaded from [www.NALW.org](http://www.NALW.org), and assisted living communities, stakeholders and members of the public may use the logo on materials, such as calendars, flyers, and invitations to support the national observance. Additionally, in the coming months, NCAL will issue a planning guide and product catalog centered on ways to “Keep Connected.” Please visit [www.NALW.org](http://www.NALW.org) for updated information and resources.

Congressional Briefing

Save the Date for May 23-24!! Please join us in our nation's capital to help lobby for long term care issues with the Illinois’ Congressional Delegation. The headquartered hotel will be the Renaissance Washington. [Click here](http://www.NALW.org) to register. It's a great opportunity to hear what's happening on the Hill and meet with your Representatives. It's one that you don't want to miss!

Upcoming Webinars

- [How I plan on succeeding with Payroll Based Journal](http://www.NALW.org)
  April 29, 2016 – 10 a.m. CDT
- [How to Run Reports in LTC Trend Tracker](http://www.NALW.org)
  June 9, 2016 – 9 a.m. CDT

IHCA PAC Information

Save the Date for the IHCA PAC Southern Illinois Golf Outing!!

IHCA PAC brought back the Southern Illinois Golf Outing last year—and it was a hit! Be sure to join us at the beautiful Stonewolf Golf Club in Fairview Heights, IL on Friday, June 17, 2016! Enjoy some fun in the sun with your fellow IHCA members, contribute to the PAC and see how you measure up on Stonewolf's special Jack Nicklaus Signature course.

**Southern Illinois Golf Outing**

Stonewolf Golf Club, Fairview Heights, IL  
Noon - Lunch  
1:00 p.m. - Shotgun Start

$100.00 per individual  
$375.00 per foursome

Sponsorships still available! [Click here](http://www.NALW.org) to view the brochure for more information.

IHCA Association Information

**IHCA Member Center Featured in the Decatur Herald & Review!**

*Senior living options abound*

Imboden Creek Living Center was recently voted the Decatur Area’s Best Assisted Living in the *Herald & Review* Reader’s Choice contest. This came as quite a surprise as Imboden Creek Living Center is the Imboden Creek’s skilled nursing facility and Imboden Creek Gardens is the assisted living center.

Rhonda Luther, chief operating officer for Imboden Creek Health Services (and IHCA Vice President) noted that this goes to show there is some confusion among the public about the various long term care options.
"We all have marketing people and they get creative – there are a lot of extra words thrown in and the consumer isn't sure what's being offered," Luther said.

"The biggest factor is your level of need," Luther added. "You want to make sure the level of need you require fits in the license of that establishment."

To see what else Luther, and her area colleagues, had to say about this topic, click here to read the full article!

**Become an IHCA Exhibitor—Gain Access to Long Term Care Decision Makers!!**

Are you looking for a way to touch base with long term care professionals? Do you want access to facility decision makers? Exhibiting at our annual expo is a great way to do just that!! Reserve your space today for the annual show in September (click here to view the prospectus, or visit our Exhibit Information page for more information)! If you have any questions, please contact Keli Showalter.

**Help Support Long Term Care Nurses! Donate to the Maitland-Warner Scholarship Fund!**

Each year, the John W. Maitland, Jr. – Joseph F. Warner Long Term Care Nurses Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to individuals seeking to pursue nursing degrees and employment in long term care in Illinois. The fund was created to honor Senator John W. Maitland, Jr., and Joseph F. Warner, two champions of long term care in Illinois. Senator Maitland is considered to have done more to advance the needs of the long term care profession and residents in the General Assembly than any other elected official in Illinois. Warner is credited with spending countless hours educating legislators and elected officials about long term care issues. A former IHCA board president, he truly valued the power of education.

You should have received a few communications from the Maitland-Warner fund asking for a donation. We hope that you will consider donating to this worthy cause to help us support long term care nurses and encourage them to move forward in their education and their careers in long term care. Click here for more information.

**New! IHCA Scholarships Available for the Annual AHCA/NCAL Convention & Expo in October**

IHCA applauds those individuals that want to continue to their education in long term care. AHCA/NCAL holds an annual convention and expo offering continuing education for long term care professionals. New this year, IHCA will award up to four (4) scholarships to administrators and direct care staff individuals who would like to attend the 67th Annual AHCA/NCAL Convention and Expo, October 16-19, 2016 in Nashville, TN. The scholarship can cover the cost of Full Member registration, transportation, lodging and food up to a maximum of $1,500 per award winner. For more information, or to access the scholarship application, visit our Scholarships page on the IHCA website.

**IHCA Member Spotlight**

**Interested in Seeing Your Company or Facility Featured in Our IHCA Member Spotlight?**

IHCA is proud of our diverse membership and all of your successes and accomplishments. We are always looking for members to feature, either here or in our other publications (like LTC Today magazine!). Has your company recently celebrated a milestone? Accomplished a goal? Undergone a major change? Do you have positive stories or news to share? Would you just like to get your name out there among your fellow IHCA members? If you would like to see your company or facility recognized in Members Only--Associate Members, Facilities, Corporations alike--contact Ashley Caldwell.